

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY:NEA:PAB:RKMCKEE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

S E C R E T STATE 291581

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM NEW DELHI DATED NOVEMBER 24, 1976
SENT SECSTATE WASHDC IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

S E C R E T NEW DELHI 17079

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, PK

SUBJECT: INDIAN COMMENTS ON PAK NUCLEAR/A-7 ISSUES TO DEPUTY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY DUBS

1. IN LUNCHEON CONVERSATION WITH MEA JOINT SECRETARIES FOR
POLICY PLANNING (DAMODARAN)/EAST EUROPE, SOVIET (PURUSHOTTAM),
AND CHINA (JHA), INDIANS ALL AGREED IN TELLING VISITING DEPUTY
ASSISTANT SECRETARY DUBS THAT INDIANS WERE NOT RPT NOT CON-
CERNED OVER PROSPECT OF PAK NUCLEAR CAPABILITY BUT PRIMARILY
OVER SHORT-TERM THREAT OF INCREASED CONVENTIONAL CAPABILITY.
PAKISTAN ACQUISITION OF ATTACK AIRCRAFT SUCH AS A-7 WOULD
"FORCE" GOI TO EXPEND LARGE BUDGETARY RESOURCES TO PROCURE
SIMILAR AIRCRAFT, DAMODARAN SAID, AND TURN INDIAN FINANCIAL
PLANNING "TOPSY-TURVY". ASKED EXPLICITLY WHETHER THEY MEANT
GOI WOULD NOT ITSELF PROCURE SIMILAR ADVANCED AIRCRAFT
FROM WESTERN OR SOVIET SOURCES IF PAKS DID NOT BUY A-7,
DAMODARAN CATEGORICALLY SAID THAT WAS CORRECT, INDIA WOULD
NOT NEED TO DO SO.

2. FURTHER ELABORATING REASONS FOR DISCOUNTING PAK NUCLEAR
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CAPABILITY, DAMODARAN AND PURUSHOTTAM ARGUED (A) PAKS WOULD

ULTIMATELY GO NUCLEAR ANYWAY AND ANY BARGAINING OF AIRCRAFT FOR REPROCESSING PLANT WAS SIMPLY BUYING LIMITED AMOUNT OF TIME, (B) PAKS WOULD BE EXTREMELY RELUCTANT TO USE NUCLEAR WEAPONS ON INDIAN POPULATION, THUS INDISCRIMINATELY KILLING HINDUS AND MUSLIMS, AND (C) PAKISTAN WAS FAR MORE VULNERABLE TO NUCLEAR ATTACK THAN INDIA BECAUSE OF ITS SMALLER SIZE AND FEWER POPULATION CENTERS. PURUSHOTTAM SUGGESTED THAT VULNERABILITY OF A-7S TO INTERDICTION BY HIGH-PERFORMANCE FIGHTERS WOULD SIMPLY PROVIDE INCENTIVE FOR GOP TO SEEK NEW FIGHTER AIRCRAFT TO PROVIDE COVER FOR A-7S AND THUS INITIATE YET ANOTHER ROUND OF ESCALATION IN WEAPONRY.

3. COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST TIME WE HAVE HEARD RESPONSIBLE GOI OFFICIALS THIS FORTHRIGHT ON SUBJECT OF INDIANS PUTTING OFF PURCHASE OF ATTACK BOMBER IF PAKS DO NOT PROCURE A-7S. THE LEVEL OF ASSURANCE IS NOT SUFFICIENTLY HIGH TO BE DEFINITIVE BUT INDICATIVE. DURING AN INFORMAL CONVERSATION WITH THE CHARGE ON NOVEMBER 23, ACTING FOREIGN SECRETARY VELLODI EXPRESSED A "PERSONAL" VIEW WHICH DISCOUNTED PAK NUCLEAR CAPABILITIES ALONG MUCH THE SAME LINES AS DAMODARAN AND PURUSHOTTAM. HE SAID HE COULD NOT CONCEIVE OF PAKISTAN ACTUALLY EMPLOYING NUCLEAR WEAPONS AGAINST INDIA AND WAS THEREFORE NOT CONCERNED WITH THIS PROSPECT. HE ADMITTED THE POSSIBILITY THAT PAKISTAN MIGHT AT SOME POINT EXPLODE A NUCLEAR DEVICE BUT IF SO ITS PURPOSE WOULD BE FOR PRESTIGE, NOT MILITARY STRENGTH. SCHNEIDER UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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